

SUCCESSION PLAN FOR THE MINNEAPOLIS FIRE DEPARTMENT

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

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ABSTRACT

The problem was that the Minneapolis Fire Department did not have a Succession Plan to develop future Chief Officers to lead the organization. The purpose of this research was to gauge internal interest in promotion to Chief Officer, to define the benefits of succession planning and to find out what elements made up an effective succession plan. Descriptive research methodology was used to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of interest expressed by Minneapolis Fire Captains in promotion to the Chief Officer ranks?
2. What are the benefits of Succession Planning?
3. What are the elements of effective Succession Plans used outside the fire service?
4. What are the elements of Succession Plans used by other fire service organizations?

This is a descriptive research project. The research approach was to survey firefighters within the organization regarding interest in preparing themselves for promotion to the executive ranks. The survey used is attached as appendix A. The results of this research are attached as appendix B. A review of literature and existing plans from other organizations was done to find out what elements make up an effective succession plan.

The results of this research included the findings from the internal survey conducted regarding interest in promotion to chief officer by current Fire Captains working for the Minneapolis Fire Department. This survey revealed significant interest in promotion. The benefits of succession planning were detailed and elements of effective Succession Plans in use by other organizations, both inside and outside the fire service, were outlined.

The recommendations of this research project include a suggestion for the development of a new Succession based on the results of the research. This recommendation includes an expansion of the Minneapolis Fire Department Professional Development and Training Plan

attached as Appendix C into a full succession plan for the department. Follow-up research should be conducted to include Firefighters and Fire Motor Operators in addition to the Captains involved in this research effort. Finally, this newly developed succession plan should be given to all current employees and be part of initial orientation for new firefighters.

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INTRODUCTION

The problem was that the Minneapolis Fire Department did not have a Succession Plan to use in developing future Chief Officers to lead the organization. Subjective evaluation, based mostly on conversations with employees, indicated that there was little interest in promotion to Chief Officer among Fire Captains within the organization. The only historical and objective data available was the lack of applicants from the ranks of Fire Captains for recent job openings at the level of Battalion Chief and Deputy Chief. Prior to this research effort, no research had been undertaken to determine the internal interest in promotion and the cause of the apparent lack of applicants for promotion to Chief Officer.

The purpose of this research was threefold. The first purpose was to gauge internal interest in promotion to Chief Officer and to find out why more Captains did not apply for promotion to Chief Officer rank. This research also attempted to discover the benefits associated with succession planning. Finally, this research looked at what elements made up an effective succession plan in other organizations, both inside and outside the fire service. The overall question to be answered by this research was: Does the Minneapolis Fire Department need a succession plan, and if they do, what should be included in the plan?

Descriptive research methodology was used to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the level of interest expressed by Minneapolis Fire Captains in promotion to the Chief Officer ranks?
2. What are the benefits of Succession Planning?
3. What are the elements of effective Succession Plans used outside the fire service?
4. What are the elements of Succession Plans used by other fire service organizations?

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The Minneapolis Fire Department is a full time professional emergency service organization with an authorized strength of 432 sworn employees and 19.5 civilians. The department provides emergency response and risk prevention related services for a metropolitan population of 382,618 people located over 59 square miles. Minneapolis firefighters responded to 33,454 calls for emergency service in 2002. Emergency medical events accounted for 65 percent of all calls for service.

The department developed and administered a test for the position of Battalion Chief in December of 2000. The department had four openings for Battalion Chiefs that were immediately filled upon development of the eligible list. Additionally, it was projected that another 5 openings would occur over the two-year life of the promotion list. Despite the large number of openings, there were only 12 applicants to take the test from the ranks of over 100 Fire Captains working for the Minneapolis Fire Department. Battalion Chief is a “closed” position, meaning that applicants from outside the organization are not allowed to submit an application. This perceived lack of interest in promotion to Chief Officer was the impetus for this research project. In addition, the most recent opening for Deputy Chief occurred in November 2001. There were four applicants for the Deputy Fire Chief position, despite the fact that there were over 60 eligible Captains and Battalion Chiefs with at least five years experience (the minimum required qualifications).

The significance of this research for the organization was threefold. First, the fire department did not have any subjective evidence about the reasons there was so little historical interest among members of the organization in promotion to the Chief Officer ranks. Second, traditionally, there was very little interest from line firefighters in formal education through college courses, despite the availability of tuition reimbursement paid by the City of

Minneapolis for courses that counted toward an Associate Degree or Bachelors Degree in Fire Administration. Lastly, the department did have a professional development plan, but lacked an up to date succession plan.

This research directly relates to the Succession/Replacement module (Module 6) of the Executive Leadership course. The first sentence in the Succession/Replacement module states that “Succession planning is an organized and systematic way to ensure that employees in a particular organization are capable, competent and willing to replace and or succeed to strategic roles within the organization.” The Minneapolis Fire Department did not have an effective program to meet the objectives of this statement in the course module.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A prominent author on the subject of succession planning stated: “A succession planning and management program is a deliberate and systematic effort by an organization to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and encourage individual advancement” (Rothwell , 2001, p. 6).

Buzzotta and Lefton (1997) describe the result of a good succession plan as “...one that keeps the talent pool filled with bright prospects who can rise to the occasion when called upon to maintain continuity of leadership” (p. 15).

In an article on succession management, Maitland (2003) interviewed Lord MacLaurin, chairman of Vodafone, the world’s largest mobile phone operator. Lord MacLaurin stated that “Failure to grapple with succession is partly due to the seduction of power. When you are chief executive, it’s a very privileged position. A lot of people really wonder what they would do without that position. There is a reluctance to plan your exit.” (p. 1). Chief Ronny J. Coleman

(2000) states that “generally a chief officer who stays in command of a department for more than seven to 10 years runs the danger of going over the territory too often.”

Ross (2002) focused on what an organization should do to prepare for the sudden loss of a Chief Executive. She argues that a company should compile a list of positions that require successors and establish an evaluation process for all potential succession candidates. Yukl (1998) found that “The development of leadership skills is likely to be greater for executives who have experience in dealing with the major issues and decisions facing the organization” (p. 421). The team approach to management and decision-making allows more people to develop the skills necessary to lead the organization after the leader leaves.

In his book on business succession planning, Winn (2000) outlines the steps necessary to replace a key leader. They are:

1. Locate the right individual.
2. Attract him or her to the organization
3. Train the new executive.

Winn goes on to add that it may be a year or more before the new key executive can fully assume the responsibilities of the lost key person and become another key person to the organization. The effectiveness of the organization is at risk while this process takes place.

At the time of a disaster which takes the lives of leaders, many organizations do not have the “bench strength” nor the necessary succession plans to replace not only those at the top, but others in positions of leadership throughout the organization. The fastest way to kill a team is to have a leader with no KSA’s (knowledge, skills and abilities) and no intention of obtaining them according to Sargent (2002). Schaefer (2002) writes that effective succession planning should start at the moment of hire, when new employees are given orientation as to the careers available to them and the path to achieve their career goals.

From a more general perspective, Evangelista (2003) writes about the first two major steps in building a succession plan. They are alignment with corporate strategy and the development of competency profiles for each management position. Evangelista advises to have specialists in employee development and performance measurement involved in the process to avoid the errors that have been made by others in the past. Jack Welch, the retired CEO of General Electric Corporation, outlined the steps he took to find a successor for his leadership position at one of the largest corporations in the world. In a book entitled “Jack, Straight from the Gut” author Welch (2001) captured these steps:

1. Develop a short list of people who could take over in an emergency.
2. Develop a list of the ideal skills and characteristics you want.
3. Develop a long list of all possible candidates.
4. Map out a development plan for each candidate.
5. Watch them like hawks.
6. Do formal reviews of the candidates twice per year.
7. Make sure the candidates all get face time with the decision-makers.
8. Try to lessen the influence of politics on the process.

Succession planning is simply a highly specialized form of employee development, write Buzzotta and Lefton (1997). They offer the following steps to successful succession planning:

1. Know where you are going.
2. Identify the competencies and skills required to get you there.
3. Develop those who exhibit leadership potential.
4. Keep candidate development on track.
5. Nurture a trusting environment.

The Learning Resource Center at the National Fire Academy contains 17 references to succession planning research done over the past 10 years by Executive Fire Officer candidates. Many of these authors discussed the need for support outside of the fire department as a key to success. Decision-makers at a higher level than the Fire Chief, including municipal leaders and elected officials need to actively participate in the fire department succession plan according to Zamor (2000). Another consideration in the political area of municipal government regarding the need for succession planning was outlined by Christiansen (2001). He argues that fire departments contend for public funds with other government agencies. When a disruption in leadership occurs, it can cause a loss of market share with other competing agencies or departments until a new leader is in place.

Hanger (2002) identified one disadvantage of a succession planning. Hanger stated that “Those employees with less loyalty to the organization may use succession planning and career development as a means to improve their employability outside of the organization.” (p. 15). Hanger goes on to write that there are four recent forces that encourage organizations to use career development programs. They are the changing diversity of the workforce, the fact that many public-sector jobs require increasing skill and education levels, the decreased prestige of public-sector jobs and finally governments are being asked to reinvent themselves and become high-performance workplaces. The benefits of a good succession plan were also outlined by Hanger. They include:

1. Identification of the current level of employee training.
2. Identification of organizational education and development needs.
3. Increased opportunities for high-potential workers.
4. Increased candidate pool for leadership positions.
5. Contributions to the accomplishment of the organization’s strategic plan.

The student manual from the Executive Leadership course at the National Fire Academy (FEMA, 2000, p. SM 6-6) states “A comprehensive selection process helps set standards for best-in-class organizations. Time spent in developing a selection process helps improve the deployment of human resources and provide for better fits.” Sample (1996) found that there are three steps to implementing a good succession plan. These three steps include conducting a job analysis, defining the appropriate assessment and evaluation process and assessing candidates to determine whether they possess the competencies necessary to be promoted. Sample also stated that his department “will have to sell the union on the benefits to the employee, the department and the community”. (p. 12).

Duncan (2000) recommends the following five-step process:

1. Replacement planning: What positions will need to be filled and when?
2. Human Resource Audit: Who is available to fill the positions?
3. High Potential Employee Identification: Who are the best candidates?
4. Employee Input: Completion of an individualized learning plan.
5. Development: Get the candidates qualified.

In a research report about succession planning, Avsec (2000) wrote that there are 9 critical components of a good succession plan. They are:

1. Support from top leadership.
2. The plan must have support from line management.
3. It must be based on a top to bottom assessment of the organization’s leadership needs.
4. The plan must be part of a larger business plan for the organization.
5. The plan needs to identify the positions within the organization that are part of the succession planning process.

6. Selection of participants must be based on an objective evaluation process.
7. The plan must be balanced with employee input.
8. The organization must put people into assignments that make them grow.
9. A good participant evaluation process must be part of the plan.

In a research report by Rohr (2000), the author focuses on experience in both staff and operations positions as a key element of an effective succession plan. This includes a well-planned staff rotation policy so leaders have the breadth of experience to make good decisions. Cummings and Worley (1993) expand on this job rotation idea by discussing the cross-directional job experiences that are used by Corning Glass Works and Hewlett Packard Corporation. Rohr (2000) also argues for specific educational requirements for each rank of Chief Officer.

The city of Roseville, California Fire Department evaluates six critical dimensions necessary for officer development according to Early (2001). They are:

1. Leadership
2. Problem solving/decision making
3. Interpersonal skills
4. Professional demeanor
5. Organizational skills
6. Oral and written communications

Morris-Lee (2001) focused on additional requirements beyond formal education when choosing a Chief Fire Officer. These requirements include the ability to analyze a situation, use creative thinking, and exercise good judgement, as well as drive, resilience and empathy. Jacobsen (2002) outlines a detailed development program for a future fire service leader. He states that every fire officer should:

1. Spend time at each rank to gain experience
2. Get some formal education, including personnel management.
3. Gain certification under NFPA 1021 Fire Officer Qualifications.
4. Find a mentor.

Boone (2000) found a wide variation in the education required to apply for a position as a Fire Chief. Of the 15 departments surveyed, four required a high school diploma, one asked for some college, and one required an Associates Degree. Nine of the communities required a Bachelors Degree and one asked for a Masters Degree.

Summary

The wide variety of literature available on professional development and succession planning influenced this research. It became apparent through the literature that there is strong support for succession planning in organizations outside the fire service. The private sector can provide a very well thought out succession plan that could be adapted for use in the Fire Service. The results of the Minneapolis Fire Department employee survey showed significant interest in promotion and that a succession plan was needed for the department. This was in contrast to the subjective findings prior to this research effort.

In contrast to the private sector, strong examples and widespread use of succession planning within the fire service were hard to find. A review of this research indicates that the succession-planning problem faced by the Minneapolis Fire Department is not unique. For example, Duncan (2000) could only find 2 fire departments out of a total of 39 respondents to a survey on the topic that had a succession plan in place at the time of her research. Bouth (2001) could not find a single fire department using succession planning. Of fifteen departments surveyed, Boone (2000) found only one that had a formal succession plan.

PROCEDURES

Research Methodology

An anonymous survey of Minneapolis Fire Department employees that currently held the rank of Captain was conducted in an attempt to answer the first research question. The Top Management Team developed the survey questions that asked Captains about their current experience and education. The survey also asked the Captain's opinions about the level of education necessary to be promoted to each rank of fire officer within the Minneapolis Fire Department and their own personal willingness to work toward these educational requirements as part of their career development plan. The survey was conducted during a Captain's training conference in early October 2003. To help insure confidentiality and increase the reliability of the data, an office support person collected the completed surveys and compiled the results. The voluntary survey was completed during work hours. The entire population of 107 Captains was asked to fill out a survey. A total of 93 out of 107 Fire Captains participated by filling out a two-page form. A copy of this survey is included in Appendix A.

Research questions two, three and four were answered by conducting a comprehensive literature review at the National Fire Academy Learning Resource Center, the local library and using the Internet. Successful strategies from other organizations as well as current trends in succession planning were studied in order to develop recommendations for a succession plan for all current and new employees. The current professional development plan in use by the Minneapolis Fire Department is included in this report as Appendix C.

Assumptions and Limitations

The confidential survey was limited to 93 Fire Captains out of a total population of 430 sworn firefighters. This represents 22% of the total number of employees in the sworn job

classifications. Firefighters, Fire Motor Operators and current Chief officers may have answered the survey questions differently.

Some of the data may be flawed by some lack of control when the survey was completed. An analysis of the answers received indicated that a very small number of the respondents were obviously not taking the process seriously.

Actual results from recommendations of previous research in other organizations were difficult to obtain. The financial impact of various management programs had not been studied to determine if new policies are having the desired impact. These factors limit the analysis of various approaches to solving the problem.

Definition of Terms

Battalion Chief: The first promotion step of the Chief Officer ranks. Battalion Chiefs are middle managers that supervise the Captains that manage the individual fire stations. Each Battalion Chief is responsible for five fire stations within their district.

Captain: The first line supervisor in charge of an emergency response crew riding on a single apparatus.

Chief Officer: All sworn fire department officers at the rank of Battalion Chief and above, including Deputy Chiefs, the Fire Marshal, the Training Chief, the Assistant Chief and the Chief of the Fire Department.

Executive Fire Officer (EFO): A management development program at the National Fire Academy to develop senior level fire chiefs to prepare for increasing levels of responsibility.

Fire Motor Operator: The first promotional rank after firefighter. The Fire Motor Operator drives the emergency response vehicle and operates the fire pumps.

Top Management Team: The top management of the Minneapolis Fire Department including all Chief Officers above the rank of Battalion Chief.

RESULTS

Research Question #1: What is the level of interest expressed by Minneapolis Fire

Captains in promotion to the Chief Officer ranks?

Coleman (2001) found that there are fewer and fewer firefighters interested in management positions. The results of the Minneapolis Fire Department employee survey provided the answer to this question for the department, and seem to show that there is a high level of interest in promotion among Fire Captains. A total of 92 out of 103 Fire Captains working for the department participated in the survey. This sample size far exceeded the accepted statistical requirements for validity. The Captains surveyed varied in experience from 2 to 27 years as a Captain working for the Minneapolis Fire Department. The statistical breakdowns of all eight survey questions are included as appendix B to this research report.

The significant findings of the survey included:

1. The current pool of Captains have achieved some formal education at the college level. Of the 92 Captains responding to the survey, 77% have taken some college level courses, with 32% of them achieving at least a 2 year Degree and 14% with at least a Bachelor's Degree. Three Captains have a Master's Degree. (Question #2).
2. Survey respondents believe that Chief Officers should have college degrees. A two-year degree was the most common response for the Battalion and Deputy Chief level. The survey also said that the Assistant Chief should have a Bachelor's Degree and the Fire Chief should have a Bachelor's or Master's Degree. (Question #3)
3. Over half of the Captains (50 out of 92) answered the survey by saying that they would not take a promotion to the Chief officer ranks, even if they were guaranteed promotion. A total of 38% of the survey respondents thought that they would like

- to be promoted to Battalion or Deputy Chief. Only six of the 92 Captains would want to be the Assistant Chief or Fire Chief. (Question 4)
4. Only one Fire Captain out of the six that aspire to lead the department thought that they could realistically achieve promotion to Assistant Chief or Fire Chief by the end of their career. Promotion to Battalion Chief or Deputy Chief was possible in the opinion of 42% of the Captains. (Question 5)
 5. The obstacles to promotion were varied, but the most common answer to why a Captain did not see themselves promoted to Chief Officer was that they were not interested in the job. Only 8% of the Captains said that they did not want to go to college. (Question 6).
 6. Only 5% of the respondents indicated that they would be willing to go to college regardless if the fire department paid for the classes. The vast majority wanted the fire department to pay for the classes. (Question 7).
 7. When asked if they were willing to work an 8-hour shift, 34% said they would do so to round out their experience. Closely mirroring the response to question 5, 48% of the Captains indicated no interest in promotion to Chief Officer. (Question 8).

Research Question #2: What are the benefits of Succession Planning?

At the time of a disaster which takes the lives of leaders, many organizations do not have the “bench strength” nor the necessary succession plans to replace not only those at the top. The fastest way to kill a team is to have a leader with no KSA’s (knowledge, skills and abilities) and no intention of obtaining them according to Sargent (2002). Buzzotta and Lefton (1997) describe the result of a good succession plan as “...one that keeps the talent pool filled

with bright prospects who can rise to the occasion when called upon to maintain continuity of leadership” (p. 15).

The benefits of a good succession plan were outlined by Hanger (2002). The steps include:

1. Identification of the current level of employee training.
2. Identification of organizational education and development needs.
3. Increased opportunities for high-potential workers.
4. Increased candidate pool for leadership positions.
5. Contributions to the accomplishment of the organization’s strategic plan.

Schaefer (2002) writes that effective succession planning should start at the moment of hire, when new employees are given orientation as to the careers available to them and the path to achieve their career goals. This gets the employees thinking about career advancement from the very beginning of their employment with the organization. This process also lets everyone know they have a chance at promotion within the department in the future, thereby providing a higher level of motivation and job satisfaction for employees.

In a research report by Rohr (2000), the author focuses on experience in both staff and operations positions as a key element of an effective succession plan. This includes a well-planned staff rotation policy so leaders have the breadth of experience to make good decisions. By rotating staff through different positions, they are better prepared to assume higher levels of responsibility in the future. These individuals can also step up in the event of a sudden loss of leadership in the organization. Cummings and Worley (1993) expand on this job rotation idea by discussing the cross-directional job experiences that are used by Corning Glass Works and Hewlett Packard Corporation. Welch (2001) also discussed the need to rotate managers through different areas of the organization to develop leaders for the future. This type of

program makes the organization stronger and more resilient to change. The advantages of using leadership teams was outlined by Yukl (1998).

Winn (2000) adds that, without an effective succession plan, it may be a year or more before a new key executive can fully assume the responsibilities of the lost key person and become another key person to the organization. The effectiveness of the organization is at risk while this process takes place. Fire departments contend for public funds with other government agencies according to Christiansen (2001). When a disruption in leadership occurs, it can cause a loss of market share with other competing agencies or departments until a new leader is in place. Continuity of leadership allows the organization to continue without losing stride.

Research question #3: What are the elements of effective Succession Plans used outside the fire service?

The private sector provided many examples of succession plans that were reviewed for applicability to the fire service. One of the most basic plans is offered by Ross (2002), focused on what an organization should do to prepare for the sudden loss of a Chief Executive. She argues that a company should compile a list of positions that require successors and establish an evaluation process for all potential succession candidates. This process can also be called workforce planning.

Evangelista (2003) writes about the first two major steps in building a succession plan. They are alignment with corporate strategy and the development of competency profiles for each management position. Evangelista advises to have specialists in employee development and performance measurement involved in the process to avoid the errors that have been made by others in the past. In his book on business succession planning, Winn (2000) outlines the

basic steps necessary to replace a key leader. They are: Locate the right individual, attract him or her to the organization and train the new executive. By using an effective succession plan, these steps can be completed before the key leader leaves the organization. Otherwise, the recruitment, selection and training process can take up to a year to complete.

Leadership teams were evaluated by Yukl (1998). Yukl found that “The development of leadership skills is likely to be greater for executives who have experience in dealing with the major issues and decisions facing the organization” (p. 421). The team approach to management and decision-making allows more people to develop the skills necessary to lead the organization after the leader leaves.

Many of the references reviewed offered a more detailed look at the steps to take when developing a succession plan. Welch (2001) developed this list when looking for a new CEO at General Electric:

1. Develop a short list of people who could take over in an emergency.
2. Develop a list of the ideal skills and characteristics you want.
3. Develop a long list of all possible candidates.
4. Map out a development plan for each candidate.
5. Watch them like hawks.
6. Do formal reviews of the candidates twice per year.
7. Make sure the candidates all get face time with the decision-makers.
8. Try to lessen the influence of politics on the process.

Succession planning is simply a highly specialized form of employee development, write Buzzotta and Lefton (1997). They offer the following steps to successful succession planning:

1. Know where you are going.

2. Identify the competencies and skills required to get you there.
3. Develop those who exhibit leadership potential.
4. Keep candidate development on track.
5. Nurture a trusting environment.

Research Question #4: What are the elements of Succession Plans used by other fire service organizations?

In contrast to the private sector, strong examples of succession planning within the fire service were hard to find. A review of this research indicates that the succession planning problem faced by the Minneapolis Fire Department is not unique. Many authors writing research reports for the Executive Fire Officer program discussed the need for support outside of the fire department as a key to success. Decision-makers at a higher level than the Fire Chief, including municipal leaders and elected officials need to actively participate in the fire department succession plan according to Zamor (2000) and Christiansen (2001). Sample (1996) stated that his department “will have to sell the union on the benefits to the employee, the department and the community”. (p. 12).

The steps to take to implement an effective succession plan were also outlined in a large number of Executive Fire Officer research reports. Sample (1996) found that there are three steps to implementing a good succession plan. These three steps include conducting a job analysis, defining the appropriate assessment and evaluation process and assessing candidates to determine whether they possess the competencies necessary to be promoted. Duncan (2000) recommends the following five-step process:

1. Replacement planning: What positions will need to be filled and when?
2. Human Resource Audit: Who is available to fill the positions?

3. High Potential Employee Identification: Who are the best candidates?
4. Employee Input: Completion of an individualized learning plan.
5. Development: Get the candidates qualified.

This list seems to be an adaptation of the list developed in the private sector and discussed by Buzzotta and Lefton, (1997).

In a research report about succession planning, Avsec (2000) wrote that there were critical components of a good succession plan. The following list outlines the requirements for the organization to consider:

1. Support from top leadership and line management.
2. It must be based on a top to bottom assessment of the organization's leadership needs and must be part of a larger business plan for the organization.
3. The plan needs to identify the positions within the organization that are part of the succession planning process.
4. Selection of participants must be based on an objective evaluation process.
5. The plan must be balanced with employee input.
6. The organization must put people into assignments that make them grow.
7. A good participant evaluation process must be part of the plan.

Some fire service authors focused on the development aspect of succession planning. The city of Roseville, California Fire Department evaluates six critical dimensions necessary for officer development according to Early (2001). They are:

1. Leadership
2. Problem solving/decision making
3. Interpersonal skills
4. Professional demeanor

5. Organizational skills
6. Oral and written communications

Jacobsen (2002) outlines a detailed development program for a future fire service leader. He states that every fire officer should:

1. Spend time at each rank to gain experience
2. Get some formal education, including personnel management.
3. Gain certification under NFPA 1021 Fire Officer Qualifications.
4. Find a mentor.

Boone (2000) found a wide variation in the education required to apply for a position as Fire Chief. Of the 15 departments surveyed, four required a high school diploma, one asked for some college, and one required an Associates Degree. Nine of the communities required a Bachelors Degree and one asked for a Masters Degree. Rohr (2000) focuses on experience in both staff and operations positions as a key element of an effective succession plan. This includes a well-planned staff rotation policy so leaders have the breadth of experience to make good decisions. Rohr also argues for specific educational requirements for each rank of Chief Officer. Morris-Lee (2001) focused on additional requirements beyond formal education when choosing a Chief Fire Officer. These requirements include the ability to analyze a situation, use creative thinking, and exercise good judgement, as well as drive, resilience and empathy.

DISCUSSION

In reviewing research done by other Executive Fire Officer students, it became obvious that succession planning was a challenge for fire departments as well as other organizations across the country. The results of the employee survey clearly show that there is a high level of interest in promotion to Battalion and Deputy Chief among current Minneapolis Fire

Department Captains. As the data shows, over 50% of the survey respondents are interested in promotion to these levels. Conversely, there does not seem to be as much interest in promotion to the top levels of management, those being Assistant Fire Chief and Fire Chief. This could be due to the 8-hour work schedule, although this question was not asked of the survey respondents. This result also agrees with the statement by Coleman (2001), when he found that there seemed to be fewer and fewer firefighters interested in management positions.

The pool of Captains had achieved some formal education at the college level. Of the 92 Captains responding to the survey, 77% have taken some college level courses, with 32% of them achieving at least a 2 year Degree and 14% with at least a Bachelor's Degree. Three Captains have a Master's Degree. This indicates that there is definitely some background and interest in formal education among Captains.

Winn (2000) said without an effective succession plan, it could be a year or more before a new key executive can fully assume the responsibilities of the lost key person. The effectiveness of the organization is at risk while this process takes place. Fire departments contend for public funds with other government agencies according to Christiansen (2001). When a disruption in leadership occurs, it can cause a loss of market share with other competing agencies or departments until a new leader is in place. Continuity of leadership allows the organization to continue without losing stride. This benefit of succession planning seems very important to the contemporary fire service, especially in light of budget constraints and the environment of a rapid pace of change.

Schaefer (2002) identified a second important benefit of succession planning. He wrote that effective succession planning should start at the moment of hire, when new employees are given orientation as to the careers available to them and the path to achieve their career goals. This gets the employees thinking about career advancement from the very beginning of their

employment with the organization. This process also lets everyone know they have a chance at promotion within the department in the future, thereby providing a higher level of motivation and job satisfaction for employees. The morale and motivation of employees working for the Minneapolis Fire Department had been severely challenged by employee layoffs in 2003. Based on the results from a recent Captain's meeting on the issue of managing change, and based on a consultant's recommendations on how to address the feelings associated with the layoffs, an effective succession plan could give employees a sense of control and hope for the future.

Yukl (1998) found that "The development of leadership skills is likely to be greater for executives who have experience in dealing with the major issues and decisions facing the organization" (p. 421). The team approach to management and decision-making allows more people to develop the skills necessary to lead the organization after the leader leaves. Some fire service organizations are moving toward Incident Management Teams to augment a single Incident Commander. This concept could be expanded to the boardroom of fire departments.

Succession planning is simply a highly specialized form of employee development, write Buzzotta and Lefton (1997). They offer the following steps to successful succession planning:

1. Know where you are going.
2. Identify the competencies and skills required to get you there.
3. Develop those who exhibit leadership potential.
4. Keep candidate development on track.
5. Nurture a trusting environment.

This is the most applicable succession planning format from the private sector for the fire service that was found in the literature review. The trust aspect of this list is very important for firefighter acceptance of any new initiative.

Duncan (2000) offered the best and most concise process for the fire service. He recommends the following five-step program:

1. Replacement planning: What positions will need to be filled and when?
2. Human Resource Audit: Who is available to fill the positions?
3. High Potential Employee Identification: Who are the best candidates?
4. Employee Input: Completion of an individualized learning plan.
5. Development: Get the candidates qualified.

A combination of the lists developed by Duncan, Buzzotta and Lefton would make a very good template for the new Minneapolis Fire Department Succession Plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research available from other organizations around the country, there are a number of recommendations that follow from the results. The results of the literature review show that succession planning is important to the long-term success of any organization. The fact that there is a high level of interest in promotion among Minneapolis Fire Department Captains and the fact that there is no formal plan to replace key leaders in the future means that the department needs to address the lack of a comprehensive succession plan as soon as possible.

The first recommended step could be done immediately. The current Professional Development Plan should be publicized and emphasized by management for the benefit of the firefighting personnel in the field. Only a few employees take advantage of the current tuition

reimbursement program at the present time. Management focus would bring awareness of this tremendous benefit provided by the City of Minneapolis to the fire stations.

A committee of employees of all ranks should be put together to develop the new succession plan. The labor union, International Association of Firefighters, Local 82 and the Human Resources Department of the city also should be consulted for input and agreement with the selection process and the educational requirements for promotion to each position that are developed by the committee. The committee should be lead by someone very familiar with succession planning. A Chief Officer from upper management also needs to be part of this committee.

The outline provided by Duncan (2000) offered the best process of succession planning for the fire service. This should serve as the template for the new succession plan. Duncan recommended the following five-step program:

1. Replacement planning: What positions will need to be filled and when?
2. Human Resource Audit: Who is available to fill the positions?
3. High Potential Employee Identification: Who are the best candidates?
4. Employee Input: Completion of an individualized learning plan.
5. Development: Get the candidates qualified.

In addition, the list should be supplemented from the information published by Buzzotta and Lefton (1997). Their list includes:

1. Know where you are going.
2. Identify the competencies and skills required to get you there.
3. Develop those who exhibit leadership potential.
4. Keep candidate development on track.
5. Nurture a trusting environment.

A training presentation should be given to all employees at the time of hire regarding succession planning and professional development. Employees need to understand right away why professional development is key to their personal success and the success of the organization. The topic of succession planning should be added to future Captains Training Conferences. Both of these training programs should be given by a Chief Officer for emphasis and to show a high level of commitment by the leadership of the fire department.

A future research effort should be undertaken to survey Firefighters and Fire Motor Operators regarding succession planning. Employees must know that management is focused on the issue and is concerned about developing leaders of the future. The next Captains and Chief Officers will come from the ranks of Firefighter and Fire Motor Operator. The educational and experience requirements for promotion should be published well in advance of implementation to allow people to acquire the necessary skills, knowledge and abilities.

Staff Officers should be rotated through leadership positions across the organization to gain the breadth of experience necessary for promotion to increasing levels of responsibility. This would also make the organization stronger and more resilient to change.

Finally, supervisors need to be held accountable for encouraging professional development among their direct reports. Individualized meetings to address performance and development plans should be held quarterly between supervisors and subordinates for the benefit of everyone working for the fire department. Professional development and the development of direct reports should also be made part of promotion interviews in the future.

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APPENDIX A

Minneapolis Fire Department Career Development Survey

October 2003

The following survey will be used to plan career development programs for future Chief Officers. We very interested in your opinions about this subject. Please take a few minutes and share your opinions. Thanks in advance for your help.

1. **How long have you been a Captain?** _____ years.

2. **What is your level of education?**
 _____ I did not finish High School _____ High school diploma/GED
 _____ Some College
 _____ 2 year College degree (Subjects) _____
 _____ 4 year degree (Subjects) _____
 _____ Master's degree (Subjects) _____

3. **Out of the 6 education categories listed above, what do you think should be the minimum level of education for a:**
 Battalion Chief? _____
 Deputy Chief? _____
 Assistant Chief? _____
 The Fire Chief? _____

4. **If you were guaranteed promotion to any rank, what rank would you like to achieve before the end of your career?**
 Current Rank _____
 Battalion Chief _____
 Deputy Chief _____
 Assistant Chief _____
 Chief of Department _____

5. **What rank do you think you can realistically achieve before the end of your career on the Minneapolis Fire Department?**
 Current Rank _____ (Answer question #6 on the next page)
 Battalion Chief _____
 Deputy Chief _____
 Assistant Chief _____
 Chief of Department _____

6. If you do not see yourself being promoted to Chief Officer some day, why not? (Please check all that apply)

- ☐ Not interested in the job
☐ The pay difference between Captain and Battalion Chief is too low.
☐ Battalion Chiefs do not have enough authority.
☐ There is so few job openings that the likelihood of promotion is low.
☐ The Chief does not like me.
☐ I don't want to go to college.
☐ Other _____

7. Assuming for a minute that you would need to have at least an Associate Degree for promotion to Deputy Chief and a Bachelor's degree for Assistant Chief or Chief, would you be willing to take the classes necessary to be promoted? (Assume that you feel you have a good chance to be promoted if you take the classes)

- ☐ I'm not interested in promotion to Deputy Chief or above.
☐ I would only take the classes if the fire department paid for them and they were conducted or available on-duty.
☐ I would take the classes if they were only available off duty and the fire department paid for them.
☐ I would take the classes regardless if the department paid for them if I had a good chance at promotion.

8. If you were interested in promotion to Chief Officer some day, how willing would you be to work on an 8-hour shift in a staff position to round out your experience?

- ☐ I am not interested in promotion to Chief Officer.
☐ I am very willing to work an 8-hour day for the experience.
☐ I would do it if I had to, but it would be a hardship.
☐ I am not willing to work on an 8-hour shift, but I would like to be promoted to Chief Officer some day.

9. Do you have any other thoughts about this subject?

Thanks for your opinions!

APPENDIX B

FIRE CAPTAIN SURVEY RESULTS

1. How long have you been a Captain?

<u>Years as Captain</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>
Less than 4 years	22
4 or 5 years	26
6 to 11 years	21
More than 11 years	23

2. What is your current level of education?

	<u>Fire Captain Experience</u>				Total
	>4 years	4-5 years	6-11 years	<11 years	
No answer	1	0	0	0	1
HS Diploma/GED	5	4	6	5	20
Some College	12	13	8	9	42
2 year Degree	1	3	3	6	13
4 year Degree	3	5	3	2	13
Master's Degree	0	1	1	1	3

3. What do you think should be the minimum level of education for the following ranks?

		<u>Chief Officer Rank</u>		
	Battalion	Deputy	Assistant	Fire Chief
No answer	6	7	7	6
HS Diploma/GED	15	9	4	4
Some College	18	9	1	1
2-year Degree	43	36	17	4
4-year Degree	10	29	47	37
Master's Degree	0	0	16	40

4. If you were guaranteed promotion to any rank, what rank would you like to achieve before the end of your career?

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>
No Answer	1
Current Rank (Captain)	50
Battalion Chief	15
Deputy Chief	20
Assistant Chief	4
Fire Chief	2

5. What rank do you think you can realistically achieve before the end of your career with MFD?

<u>Rank</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>
No Answer	3
Current Rank (Captain)	49
Battalion Chief	20
Deputy Chief	19
Assistant Chief	0
Fire Chief	1

6. If you do not see yourself being promoted to Chief Officer someday, why not?

<u>Reason</u>	<u>Number of Respondents</u>
Not interested in the job.	32
The pay difference is too low	6
Battalion Chiefs do not have enough authority	8
There are too few job openings	9
The Chief does not like me	8
I don't want to go to college.	7
Other	18

7. Assuming that you would need to have at least an Associates Degree for promotion to Deputy Chief and a Bachelors Degree for promotion to Assistant Chief and Fire Chief, would you be willing to take the college classes necessary to be promoted?

<u># of Respondents</u>	<u>Circumstances</u>
41	I'm not interested in promotion to Deputy Chief and above.
14	I would only take the classes if the fire department paid for them and they were conducted or available on duty.
12	I would only take the classes if the fire department paid for them and they were conducted or available off duty.
5	I would take the classes regardless if the fire department paid for them, if I had a good chance at promotion.

8. If you were interested in promotion to Chief Officer some day, how willing would you be to work on an 8-hour shift in a staff position to round out your experience?

<u># of Respondents</u>	<u>Circumstances</u>
44	I'm not interested in promotion to Chief Officer.
25	I am very willing to work an 8-hour day for the experience.
6	I would do it if I had to, but it would be a hardship.
6	I am not willing to work an 8-hour shift.

APPENDIX C

Professional Development and Training Plan City of Minneapolis Fire Department

Opening Statement

The Fire Chief has developed a staffing plan that requires hiring additional personnel to reach authorized strength. In addition, the Chief plans a systematic approach to promotional qualifications and examinations. There are two main goals for the plan: to prepare Fire Department personnel for management positions in the future (Succession Planning) and to retain quality employees on the Fire Department. (Workforce Planning).

Training

The Minneapolis Fire Department will provide credit-based firefighter training programs for both new and existing employees to ensure a highly trained, proficient work force to respond to emergencies for the City of Minneapolis. The intent of the credit based training system is to provide new and existing employees the opportunity to eventually earn a two-year degree in Fire Protection.

This training will also follow an apprentice program designed by the Labor/Management Committee of the Minneapolis Fire Department. The apprentice program is designed to be approved by the U.S. Department of Labor and follows recognized college level course work.

In addition, the Fire Department will contract with a qualified training institution to provide professional training as well as test administration for promotional exams within the rank structure of the Fire Department.

New Employees - Cadet Firefighters

A new employee of the Minneapolis Fire Department is a Cadet Firefighter. The Cadet Firefighter must complete “basic” training before being assigned to the Minneapolis Fire Department training facility. Basic training is considered to be successful completion of the following course work within an accredited fire-training program.

- ☐ Firefighter I
- ☐ Firefighter II
- ☐ Emergency Medical Technician
- ☐ Hazardous Materials First Responder Operational
- ☐ Hazardous Materials Technician
- ☐ Confined Space Training
- ☐ High Angle Rope Rescue

This college level training provides the academic foundation for the new Cadet Firefighter and lasts 3 months. Completion of the academic phase leads to additional practical application training at the Minneapolis Fire Department’s training facility (6-8 weeks). Each cadet must

complete both phases of training in order to begin work in a fire station. This training follows a regular 8-hour day, 5-day workweek until completion. Fire Cadet Training will be provided for classes of 15-40 fire cadets. The instruction shall be continuous until completion of all the required classes.

Existing Employees Promotional and Technical Training

Existing employees of the Minneapolis Fire Department will continue to build upon the basic training received as a Cadet. The training is more advanced to prepare the employee for promotional opportunities within the Fire Department. There are four levels of advancement within the Fire Department rank structure. The following are the promotion levels along with training necessary for each rank:

1. *Fire Motor Operator (FMO)*

The primary functions of the FMO are to operate in a safe and knowledgeable manner all Fire Department vehicles and maintain fire apparatus to which they are assigned. The FMO must assume the responsibilities of a Company Commander (Captain) as required.

Completion of the following course work is necessary for promotion to FMO and for qualification in the apprentice program:

- ☐ Apparatus Operator
- ☐ Introduction to Fire Protection
- ☐ Fire Inspector Basic
- ☐ Company Functions
- ☐ Building Construction
- ☐ Introduction to Personal Computers

The basic class of instruction for FMO is Apparatus Operator. This class meets or exceeds the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) requirements for Apparatus Operator professional qualification. This class will be offered at least every other year and will include pertinent information on operations and procedures specific to the Minneapolis Fire Department. The class is to be offered prior to the promotional test for FMO.

The promotional examination will include a written multiple-choice test, a written hydraulics test and hands on practical test. The written and written hydraulics tests will be pass-fail and the hands on practical portion of the test will be used to rank candidates on the promotional list. The educational institution will provide and administer the written tests, score the written tests, administer the hands on portion, and evaluate the hands on practical test. The hands on evaluation will include a scoring system that addresses key points of both recognized NFPA standards and Minneapolis Fire Department operating procedures. Staff from the Minneapolis Fire Department will assist in the development of the test and the scoring system.

2. *Fire Captain*

The primary functions of the Fire Captain are to supervise the fire prevention, suppression and emergency medical activities for the company to which they are assigned. The Captain is

responsible for the maintenance of the station, apparatus, tools and equipment of the company as well as evaluation of employees assigned to their crew. The courses for Fire Captain include the following:

- ☐ Hazardous Materials Specialty classes
 - Team Leader
 - Safety Officer
 - Specialist Mitigation I Chemistry
 - Monitoring
 - Containers
 - Flammable solids, liquids, and gases
 - Poisons, Radiation, Corrosives and Toxics
 - Specialist Mitigation II Explosives and Clandestine drug labs
- ☐ Line Officer Basic
- ☐ Managing Fire Department Personnel
- ☐ Fire Ground Control
- ☐ Fire Department Administration Basic
- ☐ Writing and Research
- ☐ Fire Instructor Basic
- ☐ Fire Investigator Basic
- ☐ Fire Inspector Basic

These classes will be offered with completion prior to the anticipated promotional exam date. The Minneapolis Fire Department will coordinate testing for the position of Fire Captain.

The promotional exam will include a multiple-choice written test covering information from the required academic courses as well as the Minneapolis Fire Department Operations Manual.

There will be two assessment center exercises included in the promotional exam for Fire Captain. The first will be a human resources (personnel) problem and the second will be a fire ground scenario. The personnel problem will assess the candidate's ability to manage personnel issues in accordance with policy.

The educational institution will develop, administer, and score the fire ground scenario part of the assessment center. The fire ground scenario evaluation must include a scoring system that addresses key points of both recognized NFPA standards and Minneapolis Fire Department operating procedures. Staff from the Minneapolis Fire Department will assist in the development of the test and the scoring system.

National Fire Academy

Upon promotion to Fire Captain, opportunities will be offered to apply to and attend the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland. The National Fire Academy is part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The N.F.A. offers a wide range of management and developmental courses designed specifically for the Fire Service. These programs are delivered in a concentrated; resident setting that is most conducive to intensive learning. The on-campus programs target mid and top level fire officers. Programs available for Fire Captains include:

- ☐ Interpersonal Dynamics
- ☐ Fire Service Communications
- ☐ Hazardous Materials Operating Site Practices
- ☐ Hazardous Materials Incident Management
- ☐ Command and Control of Fire Department Operations at Multi Alarm Incidents

3. *Battalion or District Chief*

The primary functions of the Battalion or District Chief are to manage the fire prevention and suppression activities in a fire district and be responsible for the protection of lives and property. Battalion Chiefs supervise five fire stations and 7-8 Fire Captains. The courses for Battalion or District Fire Chief will include the following:

- ☐ Fire Department Administration Advanced
- ☐ Incident Management
- ☐ Statistical Analysis to Fire Protection
- ☐ Fire Sprinkler Design
- ☐ Critical Thinking
- ☐ Oral Presentation
- ☐ Concepts in Mathematics
- ☐ Ethics

These classes are to be offered with completion prior to the anticipated promotional exam date. Subsequent classes will be offered prior to anticipated test dates in subsequent years. The Minneapolis Fire Department will coordinate testing for the position of Battalion Chief.

There will be two assessment center exercises included in the promotional exam for Battalion Chief. The first will be a human resources (personnel) problem and the second will be a fire ground scenario. The personnel problem will assess the candidate's ability to manage personnel issues in accordance with policy.

The educational institution will develop, administer and score the written exam as well as the fire ground scenario assessment center. The written exam shall include information from the required courses as well as the Minneapolis Fire Department Operations Manual. The fire ground scenario evaluation will include a scoring system that addresses key points of both recognized NFPA standards and Minneapolis Fire Department operating procedures. Staff from the Minneapolis Fire Department will assist in the development of the test and the scoring system.

National Fire Academy Courses:

In addition to the National Fire Academy Courses listed under Fire Captain, Battalion Chiefs are encouraged to apply for and complete the following courses:

- ☐ Command and Control of Natural and Man-made Disasters
- ☐ Command and Control of Target Hazards

The National Fire Academy offers a four-year Executive Fire Officer program for senior level fire officers. Battalion Chiefs are encouraged to apply for this graduate level program.

4. *Fire Investigator*

The functions of the Fire Investigator are to determine the cause and origin of all fires with damage in excess of \$100 or incidents resulting in personal injury or death. Upon determining that the cause is suspicious or arson, the Fire Investigator will work with the Minneapolis Police Bomb/Arson unit to assist in the investigation of the crime. In addition, they will be required to assist and participate in a juvenile fire setter education program.

The basic classes of instruction for Fire Investigator will include the following:

- ☐ Fire Investigator Basic
- ☐ Fire Investigation Advanced -or-
- ☐ Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA)
 - Basic Fire/Arson Investigation
 - Intermediate Fire/Arson Investigation
 - On-Scene Fire/Arson Investigation

These classes are to be offered with completion prior to the anticipated promotional exam date. Subsequent classes will be offered prior to anticipated test dates. The Minneapolis Fire Department will coordinate testing for the position of Fire Investigator.

The educational institution will develop, administer and score the written exam. The written exam shall include information from the required courses as well as the Minneapolis Fire Department Operations Manual.

There is also a National Fire Academy course in Fire and Arson Investigations.

5. *Deputy Chief*

A Deputy Fire Chief is the command officer of a division of the Fire Department. They are responsible for the formulation and recommendation for approval of policies on fire and emergency operations, fire prevention, training and human resources. The Deputy Chiefs are responsible for initiating and directing planning programs to address evolving issues in emergency service delivery through committees and work groups involved in quality improvement. They must enforce all rules, regulations and policies of the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis Fire Department. They must be able to perform the duties of the Duty Deputy Chief, Fire Marshal, Training Chief and Personnel Deputy in the absence of one of their peers. The following are the educational opportunities that prepare fire officers for promotion to Deputy Chief:

1. Completion of the Fire Protection Associate Degree Program.
2. Completion of the National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program.
3. Completion of the City of Minneapolis Leadership Development Program.
4. College level course work in Management, Labor Relations, Budgeting and Public Human Resources.

In addition to formal educational opportunities, Deputy Chiefs are expected to have served in more than one functional area of the fire department including assignment to the training division.

Deputy Chief is an appointed position and is not a permanent rank. The promotion process includes a letter of interest and resume' submitted to the Fire Chief. Qualified candidates must demonstrate the required skills, knowledge and ability required of a senior manager.

An assessment center exercise is the second step of the promotion process. The assessment center exercises give the candidate the opportunity to demonstrate their ability to perform the functions required of the position.

An interview with the Fire Chief is the third step in the process. During this interview, the Fire Chief discusses the candidate's educational background, work history and relevant experience. The results of the assessment center exercise will be discussed during the interview and the candidate is asked to explain their solutions to the problems presented.

The Fire Chief makes the final promotion decision based on the three components outlined above.

6. Assistant Chief

The Assistant Chief conducts the Day-to-day operations of the Fire Department and coordinates the activities of all the divisions through the Deputy Chiefs. The Assistant Chief is the chief investigative officer of the Fire Department and insures compliance with department policies and programs. The Assistant Chief assumes command of the Fire Department in the absence of the Fire Chief. The following are education opportunities that prepare fire officers for promotion to Assistant Chief:

1. Completion of the educational opportunities for Deputy Chief.
2. Bachelor's Degree in Fire Protection or Public Administration.
3. Graduate level course work in Management, Labor Relations, Budgeting or Public Human Resources.

The Fire Chief appoints the Assistant Chief. The promotion process follows the same process as promotion to Deputy Chief.

7. Fire Chief

The Fire Chief is the Chief Executive Officer of the Fire Department. The Fire Chief provides leadership, planning and direction to the Senior Management Team and the entire Fire Department workforce. The Fire Chief is responsible for the preparation and adherence to the annual budget. The Fire Chief is the principal Public Relations Officer of the Fire Department. The following educational opportunities prepare senior fire officers for appointment to Fire Chief:

1. Completion of the educational opportunities of the Deputy Chief and Assistant Chief positions.
2. Graduate Level course work in Strategic Planning, Organizational Theory, Employment Law, Public Finance and related subjects.

The Fire Chief must have experience in most or all functional areas of a modern emergency service organization.

The Mayor and City Council appoint the Fire Chief.